

OFFICE OF DAKOTA COUNTY ATTORNEY
JAMES C. BACKSTROM
COUNTY ATTORNEY



Dakota County Judicial Center
1560 Highway 55
Hastings, Minnesota 55033-2392
Phillip D. Prokopowicz, Chief Deputy
Karen A. Schaffer, First Assistant
Monica Jensen, Community Relations Director

Telephone
(651) 438-4438
FAX: (651) 438-4479 (Civil Division)
FAX: (651) 438-4500 (Criminal Division)
FAX: (651) 438-4499 (Juvenile/Admin Division)
E-mail: attorney@co.dakota.mn.us

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NEWS RELEASE

**Lock the Lid on Access to Prescription and Over-The-Counter Drugs:
Dakota County Offers Resources to Reduce Youth Access to Dangerous Drugs**

Tragically, overdoses of prescription medications are in the news. Dakota County Attorney James Backstrom and Sheriff Dave Bellows want citizens to know that by working together, with schools, medical professionals, parents and treatment programs we can reduce access to prescription (Rx) drugs and over-the-counter (OTC) medications that could be abused.

According to the AARP (American Association of Retired Persons) 3/4 of people age 45 or older take an average of four prescription medications daily. Teens are abusing prescription drugs because they are safer to use than illicit drugs, there is fewer stigmas attached to using them, there are less side effects than illicit drugs, and parents don't care as much if youth get caught. Using Rx and OTC drugs as they were not intended is dangerous, has deadly consequences and is illegal!

The Dakota County Safe & Drug Free Schools Coordinators developed a prescription and over-the-counter drug abuse prevention packet which is designed to:

1. Increase awareness of Rx and OTC drug abuse;
2. Encourage monitoring quantities and safeguarding medications;
3. Educate individuals on proper disposal of medications; and
4. Keep young people safe!

The resources from the prevention packet have been distributed to schools and law enforcement agencies throughout Dakota County. Information will be disseminated in a variety of venues to encourage residents throughout Dakota County to properly secure and account for their prescription medications.

Dakota County Attorney Backstrom stated, "This is an opportunity for citizens of our community to join other Americans and stand together to promote awareness, safety and healthy youth. We invite everyone to get involved in this effort to keep prescription medications secure and to educate our youth about the proper use of over-the-counter medications."

Dakota County Sheriff Dave Bellows added, "It is important to work together as law enforcement, medical professionals and citizens to keep our community safe from the growing problem of prescription and over-the-counter medication abuse."

Access to Dakota County prevention materials about this issue are available on-line now by logging on to www.dakotacounty.us and search **Prescription**, or obtain a kit by contacting Monica Jensen at 651-438-4440. More prescription drug resources are available at www.drugfree.org.

If you have questions or would like additional information, contact James Backstrom at 651-438-4440.

Lock the lid on Rx and OTC drugs getting into the wrong hands!